

HANSEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2818.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### MINERAL LEASING ACT AMENDMENTS REGARDING TRONA MINING

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3063) to amend the Mineral Leasing Act to increase the maximum acreage of Federal leases for sodium that may be held by an entity in any one State, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3063

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds and declares that—

(1) The Federal lands contain commercial deposits of trona, with the world's largest body of this mineral located on such lands in southwestern Wyoming.

(2) Trona is mined on Federal lands through Federal sodium leases issued under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920.

(3) The primary product of trona mining is soda ash (sodium carbonate), a basic industrial chemical that is used for glass making and a variety of consumer products, including baking soda, detergents, and pharmaceuticals.

(4) The Mineral Leasing Act sets for each leaseable mineral limitations on the amount of acreage of Federal leases any one producer may hold in any one state or nationally.

(5) The present acreage limitation for Federal sodium (trona) leases has been in place for over five decades, since 1948, and is the oldest acreage limitation in the Mineral Leasing Act. Over this time frame Congress and/or the BLM has revised acreage limits for other minerals to meet the needs of the respective industries. Currently, the sodium lease acreage limitation of 15,360 acres per state is approximately one-third of the per state Federal lease acreage cap for coal (46,080 acres) and potassium (51,200 acres) and one-sixteenth that of oil and gas (246,080 acres).

(6) Three of the four trona producers in Wyoming are operating mines on Federal leaseholds that contain total acreage close to the sodium lease acreage ceiling.

(7) The same reasons that Congress cited in enacting increases in other minerals' per state lease acreage caps apply to trona: the advent of modern mine technology, changes in industry economics, greater global competition, and need to conserve the Federal resource.

(8) Existing trona mines require additional lease acreage to avoid premature closure, and are unable to relinquish mined-out areas to lease new acreage because those areas continue to be used for mine access, ventilation, and tailings disposal and may provide future opportunities for secondary recovery by solution mining.

(9) Existing trona producers are having to make long term business decisions affecting the type and amount of additional infrastructure investments based on the certainty

that sufficient acreage of leaseable trona will be available for mining in the future.

(10) To maintain the vitality of the domestic trona industry and ensure the continued flow of valuable revenues to the Federal and state governments and products to the American public from trona production on Federal lands, the Mineral Leasing Act should be amended to increase the acreage limitation for Federal sodium leases.

#### SEC. 2. AMENDMENT OF MINERAL LEASING ACT.

Paragraph (2) of subsection (b) of section 27 of the Mineral Leasing Act (41 Stat. 448; 30 U.S.C. 184(b)(2)) is amended by striking "fifteen thousand three hundred and sixty acres" and inserting "30,720 acres".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN) and the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN).

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3063, a bill to amend the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 with respect to limitations upon the amount of acreage an entity may hold within any one State. This bill would grant discretion to the Secretary of the Interior to raise the statutory limitation upon the amount of acreage a company may hold on a statewide basis for sodium leases and permits.

Mr. Speaker, the current limit was established by a 1948 amendment to the Mineral Leasing Act and was set at 15,360 acres, a reasonable size at that time during mining. But, Mr. Speaker, a modern operation requires a mine-plat complex which may cost well over \$300 million to build.

Like other industries today, consolidation to achieve higher efficiency is taking place in this soda ash business. H.R. 3063 before us today would give the Secretary of the Interior the authority to raise the now too low acreage limit, after he has, in due course, determined it would not be anti-competitive to do so. Otherwise, Federal lessees may need to surrender mined-out leases before backfilling underground voids with tailings currently stored on the surface, a method which the Bureau of Land Management would like to see remain available.

Also, solution mining of the underground pillars left in place cannot occur if the leases are returned to the Government prematurely. From a royalty flow viewpoint, it is desirable for our domestic industry to have these options available.

The administration testified last month before the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources in support of H.R. 3063.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3063 would amend the Mineral Leasing Act to grant the Secretary of the Interior the discretion to increase a number of Federal leases which may be held by any one producer in a single State.

The present acreage limitation for sodium leases of 15,360 acres has been in place for 5 decades. The bill would increase the limitation to 30,720 acres per producer.

The U.S. soda ash producers, four of which are in Wyoming, are competitive with one another for a share of their relatively flat domestic market. They are also faced with strong international competition. Wyoming generates approximately 2 million tons of soda ash per year. Other countries, including China and India, with vast supplies of Trona have erected tariff and nontariff barriers to support their own less efficient producers, making it difficult to export U.S. soda ash.

The gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN) believes that giving the Secretary of Interior the discretion to raise acreage limitations will have a beneficial effect on the industry's ability to remain competitive.

Congress set forth acreage limits in the Mineral Leasing Act to ensure that no single entity held too much of any single mineral reserve. The lease limitation ensures that there is sufficient competition while providing an incentive for development of these reserves and ensuring a reasonable rate of return to the Federal and State treasuries.

We expect any future Secretary of the Interior who uses this discretionary authority to raise acreage limitations for sodium leases to include a finding that raising an acreage for a producer would not have a negative effect on either Federal royalty revenues or competition.

The Clinton administration testified in favor of this bill. We have no objections on passing this under the suspension of the House rules.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers on this, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT).

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, I support the current bill.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3063.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof)

the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2862, H.R. 2863, H.R. 2541, H.R. 2818, and H.R. 3063.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

#### CONDEMNING ARMENIAN ASSASSINATIONS

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 222) condemning the assassination of Armenian Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian and other officials of the Armenian Government and expressing the sense of the Congress in mourning this tragic loss of the duly elected leadership of Armenia.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 222

Whereas on October 27, 1999, several armed individuals broke into Armenia's Parliament and assassinated the Prime Minister of Armenia, Vazgen Sargsian, the Chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Karen Demirchian, the Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Yuri Bakhshian, the Minister of Operative Issues, Leonard Petrossian, and other members of the Armenian Government;

Whereas Armenia is working toward democracy, the rule of law, and a viable free market economy since obtaining its freedom from Soviet rule in 1991; and

Whereas all nations of the world mourn the loss suffered by Armenia on October 27, 1999: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—*

(1) deplores the slaying of the Prime Minister of Armenia, Vazgen Sargsian, the Chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Karen Demirchian, the Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Parliament, Yuri Bakhshian, the Minister of Operative Issues, Leonard Petrossian, and other members of the Armenian Government struck down in this violent attack;

(2) strongly shares the determination of the Armenian people that the perpetrators of these vile acts will be swiftly brought to justice so that Armenia may demonstrate its resolute opposition to acts of terror;

(3) commends the efforts of the late Prime Minister and the Armenian Government for their commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and for supporting free market movements internationally; and

(4) continues to cherish the strong friendship between Armenia and the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 222.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I support the motion to suspend the rules and pass this concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 222, introduced by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROGAN), which is identical to the language of a resolution introduced by a bipartisan group of Members of the Senate. It is hoped that this will have the support of my colleagues in the House as well.

The killings that took place in Yerevan, Armenia, on October 27 were deplorable. While the perpetrators claimed to be acting on behalf of the Armenian people, their means of acting, the murders of top officials, are certainly not the way to build a true democracy of Armenia or another such struggling countries.

This resolution properly calls for the trial of those accused of these murders. We hope that the process of fair trial and judgment can help Armenians better understand the motive behind these murders. This process should be as much a part of democracy in Armenia as it is here. True democracy cannot be created by senseless murders.

Armenia faces serious difficulties, not just the economic and political difficulties that face all the States in the former Soviet Union, but the need for a peaceful resolution of a conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan that has been merely suspended by cease-fire for the past 5 years.

The murders of top officials in Armenia certainly did not help that small nation to resolve their serious problems, but the adoption of this concurrent resolution by the House may be helpful by making it clear to the Armenian people that our Nation continues to support democracy and their nation and opposes such acts of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support the motion to suspend the rules and pass this concurrent resolution, and I invite my colleagues to join in support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. The original version of this legislation was cosponsored by 50 Members of this House from both sides of the aisle, evidence of the widespread sense of sadness felt by all of us over the tragic events in Armenia on Wednesday, October 27.

On that day, Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian was assassinated in an attack

by four gunmen who stormed into Parliament while it was in session of the Armenian capital of Yerevan. Other lawmakers and government officials were killed in the attack in the parliament chamber, including the chairman of the National Assembly, in effect the Speaker of Parliament, Karen Demirchian.

While we mourn the loss of all of these dedicated public servants, I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that democracy in Armenia is strong. The commitment on the part of Armenia's elected government leaders and the vast majority of Armenia's people to democracy, to the orderly transfer of power, to peace and stability within Armenia and in the region, all remain as strong as ever.

Clearly, Armenia is still reeling from the shock of recent events. But I think special praise and recognition is appropriate for the way Armenia's president, Robert Kocharian, and the entire Armenian government have moved swiftly to restore stability to the political leadership.

A special session of Parliament recently elected a new speaker and two deputy speakers. President Kocharian appointed Aram Sargsian, the 36-year-old brother of the slain prime minister, to the post of prime minister. The new prime minister is a relative new-comer to politics, although he has been active in a major veterans' organization.

As President Kocharian stated during a special session of Parliament, "Our state structure is stable and has proved to be able to deal with such crisis." The Parliament's choices for the new leadership posts will help ensure stability, since they come from the ruling coalition that enjoys a majority under the Unity banner. The new Speaker of Parliament, Armen Khachadrian, said, "All programs that were envisioned will be implemented."

Mr. Speaker, the events of 3 weeks ago have been a source of shock and sadness for all the friends of Armenia in this Congress and for all the American friends of Armenia, including more than 1 million Americans of Armenian descent. But our sadness is tempered by the knowledge that Armenia will continue to move forward with the political and economic reforms it began when it won its independence more than 8 years ago.

For me and many of my colleagues here, there was a particularly haunting and poignant feeling when we heard of the death of Prime Minister Sargsian. The prime minister was our guest in this very Capitol building just a few weeks ago, on September 30. More than 30 Members of Congress, and many of our staff, had the opportunity to hear the prime minister give a very strong speech in which he stressed his commitment to continuing with economic reforms while working for a settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict and